

The New York Times.

ADOLPH S. OCHS, Publisher 1896-1935

PUBLISHED EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR BY THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY

ARTHUR HAYS SULZBERGER, *Chairman of the Board*

ORVIL E. DRYFOOS, *President and Publisher*

AMORY H. BRADFORD, *Vice President*

HARDING F. BANCROFT, *Secretary*

FRANCIS A. COX, *Treasurer*

Letters to The Times

Moon Trip Plan Opposed

**Its Costliness and Harmful Effect
on Disarmament Efforts Cited**

*The writer of the following is
Professor of Theoretical Physics at
George Washington University.*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Like the climbing of Mount Everest, the accomplishment of an orbital flight which covered a distance greater than that of a round trip to the moon was an admirable sport indeed.

Should we now try to land on the moon? Let us assume we get our men on the moon before Russia succeeds in so doing, and let the first wave of enthusiasm and pride give way to a sober-minded evaluation.

We shall then find ourselves in the possession of masses of data to evaluate, and we will be equipped to answer questions as to whether the moon's surface is dust or ash, stone or rubble. The findings are going to be quite unimportant and the expedition will scarcely be likely to lead to a much better understanding of the great plan presented by the nature of the universe. This enterprise will be a sportive, technological achievement, and quite off balance when seen in relation to our multibillion-dollar undertaking.

The inventor of radar, Sir Robert Watson-Watt, has asked whether "spacism scrambled escapism?" Along with many other people he sees the great potentialities of the United States for coping with the ills of this world: with destitute poverty, which breeds violence and war. Sir Robert suggests that we apply our talents to education, to health and welfare, as well as to the fields of true scientific research in the natural, medical and social sciences and in the humanities. Such efforts would truly raise the prestige of the United States.

Drain on Talents

To land a man on the moon (and bring him home again) will put a drain on our available talents for real scientific endeavors. The effort will create a megalomaniac army of specialized technicians who, like miners, cannot readily be relocated into other professions. These technicians will consider the missiles arms industry their own profession and they will naturally want it perpetuated. Clearly such a situation would become a major obstacle to serious efforts to curb the missile arms race, thus making peace more difficult to achieve. We had better not commit ourselves now to extravagant expenditures in a potentially moribund industry.

With some insight we still may be able to direct the space effort into much less costly and certainly more interesting channels. If we aim to get an unmanned flight to Mars and are able to find out what kind of life, if any, exists there, we shall have made a truly momentous discovery.

Why not undertake such an exploration as a cooperative effort of East and West, analogous to the International Geophysical Year? Then the space race may turn from a menace of military conquest into a means of smashing secrecy and suspicion. It may turn into a joint endeavor apt to bring better international understanding. The Antarctic treaty and the weather satellite agreement have set great precedents in this direction.

HERBERT JEHLE.

Washington, May 21, 1963.